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# Performance drugs: Baseball, yes, but Columbia?

By **JANESE HEAVIN** of the Tribune's staff  
Published Friday, December 14, 2007

Professional baseball players might have relied on steroids to enhance performance, but some say local students are resisting the temptation to bulk up illegally.

"I think most everyone believes steroid use basically tears your body up," University of Missouri Assistant Baseball Coach Evan Pratt said, "and they're finding other ways to get better in the weight room and using the right supplements. ... It's not worth doing to get an extra five or 10 home runs a year."

MU players are given routine drug tests and educational materials warning them of the dangers of steroid use, Pratt said. "The guys at this level are pretty much aware of what's going on," he said.

Steroids use isn't prevalent in Columbia Public Schools, either, said Kristyn Wright, a district spokeswoman who specializes in student substance abuse. She pointed to a 2006 survey of freshmen and juniors that showed less than one-half of 1 percent of students have tried steroids.

Still, colleges and high schools are constantly fighting the impression that using steroids is an acceptable way of improving performance, especially when reports show professional athletes have used the drug. That's now the case after former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell released his long-anticipated drug investigation report yesterday, accusing baseball greats such as Roger Clemens of using steroids.

While the Mitchell Report zooms in on Major League Baseball, steroid use spreads well beyond the baseball diamond, MU chemistry Professor Rainer Glaser said.

"It's not just a baseball-specific problem," Glaser said in a news release. "It's everywhere in sports - football, cycling, baseball, track and field - everywhere. I'm worried about what the use of steroids does to society and the message it sends to young kids and fans. It's giving people the wrong idea about sports."

Steroid use can increase chances of stroke and cancer, he said. It's also linked to elevated cholesterol levels and an increase risk of contracting hepatitis and HIV.

Although local schools report few problems, a federal crackdown on anabolic steroid distribution in September indicates that the drug has made its way to Columbia. April D. Wilson, 32, of Columbia and Bryan G. Wilson, 38, a former Columbia resident who now lives in Kansas City, were arrested and charged with distributing anabolic steroids throughout the country. Sgt. Scott Young of the Columbia Police Department said at the time it was the only steroid investigation he knew of in the area.

Rick Kindhart, assistant executive director of the Missouri State High School Activities Association, hopes the Mitchell Report drives home to students the pitfalls of steroid use. "The Mitchell Report, for probably the first time on the national stage, puts some teeth in the fact that decisions professional athletes make can have a negative effect on young people," he said. "Obviously, from our perspective working with the high school level, it's really important that we're providing education and making sure everybody knows this is not something that can be swept under the

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In light of steroid scandals among professional baseball players such as Barry Bonds, state Sen. Matt Bartle has prefiled legislation that would require high schools to randomly test athletes for steroids and other drugs.

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